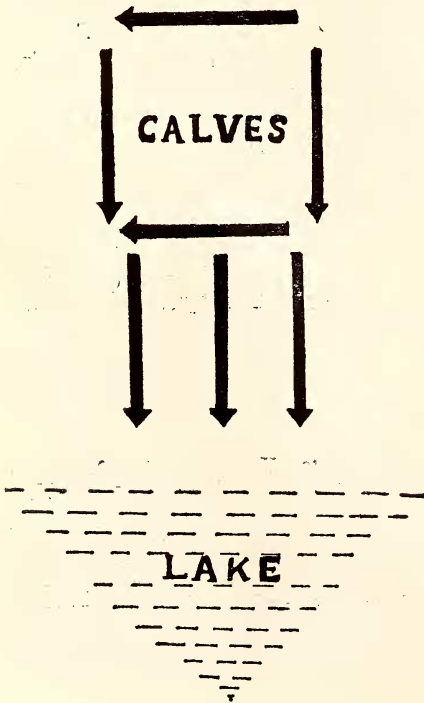


2. A CURIOUS PROTECTIVE DEVICE AMONG WILD ELEPHANTS¹

(With a text-figure)

Recently, I had an opportunity of making a faunistic survey at Thekkady (Kerala State) on the bank of Periyar Lake. The lake is an artificial one, formed out of the impounded waters of the Periyar River for irrigating the Vaigai Valley in Madras State. Part of the original forest on the hillocks on the way is submerged by the diverted river water and, in the midst of the lake, we can see isolated hillocks and, on them, remnant strips of the forest. The Kerala Government has established a game sanctuary for wild elephants at this beautiful place.

On 23-3-1962, our party proceeded to Periyar head-water works. On the way, we noticed 23 wild elephants (all cows) feeding on the grass on an isolated hillock. One of us started taking a movie from our boat, when we were still some distance from the shore. Probably disturbed by the sound of the motor boat and of the movie camera, one of the elephants gave a loud trumpet call. Immediately, another



batch of 14 elephants, which included one old tusker, two smaller tuskers, and five calves, came running. This new batch obviously belonged to the same herd, since they mingled freely with the old batch. Three of them, including the one which trumpeted, stood facing the boat. Four cows formed square behind them (see text-figure, in which the arrowheads represent the heads of the elephants), and two calves were driven into the square. A similar square was formed for the other three calves. Both the squares were closely packed. This phenomenon is obviously a curious protective device for the young. Some of the elephants led by the old tusker

¹ Communicated by Dr. K. K. Tiwari, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta 13.

